

Legislative Updates of interest for Higher Education

Week of April 9 – April 13, 2007

In the House –

Several subcommittees and committees met during the week and considered legislation relating to higher education. On Tuesday, a subcommittee of House Ways and Means met and carried over its consideration of legislation, H.3793, to add Sherman College of Straight Chiropractic as a LIFE scholarship eligible institution. On Wednesday, the full House Ways and Means Committee voted to report out favorably several bills including H.3495 relating to agency head salary commission and inclusion of technical college presidents, S.321 relating to use of bond funds posted by nonpublic postsecondary institutions, S.451 relating to athletic facilities revenue bond limits for USC and Clemson, and S.243 relating to the hydrogen infrastructure development fund. Also, on Wednesday, the K-12 subcommittee of the House Education and Public Works Committee took up and carried over legislation, H.3728, relating to weighting of dual credit courses in the state's Uniform Grading Scale, and the Higher Education subcommittee of House Education and Public Works voted to report to the full committee favorably as amended H.3394 to enact the Spartanburg Community College Enterprise Campus Authority Act. In the chamber on Thursday, H.3885 was introduced and referred to the Ways and Means Committee. This legislation entitled "Twenty-First Century Scholars Program" would enact provisions to provide for a fund to enable certain eighth grade students who are eligible for free and reduced lunches and meet certain other conditions to be awarded tuition scholarships upon enrollment into public or independent colleges and universities.

In the Senate –

The Senate Finance Committee held budget deliberations during the week and completed their work on Friday. Of note in the higher education recommendations, Senate Finance has recommended increased funding for scholarship/grant programs including increases to fully fund Palmetto Fellows, LIFE and HOPE programs; a \$5 million increase for Lottery Tuition Assistance program; a \$2.5 million increase for need-based grants; a \$2.5 million increase for S.C. Tuition Grants along with a provision to include Bob Jones University as an eligible institution; and a \$1.3 million increase for the National Guard Loan Repayment Program. Senate Finance recommendations also include increased funding for colleges and universities to address operating needs including among other items funding to address parity issues and deferred maintenance needs. Senate Finance has included \$2 million to provide for the continuation of the state's Higher Education Electronic Library and lottery funding to continue higher education programs funded in past years such as technology funding for public institutions which was increased by \$2 million to a total of \$14 million and the Centers of Economic Excellence (Endowed Chairs) which was funded at its FY07 level of \$30 million. Among items requested by CHE in its requests for the agency, the Committee's recommendations, like the House budget, include recurring funding requested for EEDA initiatives and SREB program increases and, unlike the House budget, include a nonrecurring appropriation to fund the agency's technology request and partial funding for the agency's request to continue level funding for GEAR UP. As was the case in the House budget, the Senate Finance did not recommend funding for CHE's requests for Academic Program Review or the Access & Equity program. The budget recommendations of the Finance Committee are expected to be available during the legislative week of April 17. Budget deliberations of the full Senate are expected to take place during the week of April 23.

In regard to other legislation, a bill, S.657, to enact the S.C. Critical Needs Nursing Initiative Act was introduced on Tuesday and referred to Senate Education. This legislation contains provisions to increase the availability of nurses by providing for the enhancement of nursing faculty salaries, the addition of new nursing faculty, scholarships/loans/grants for students pursuing nursing faculty positions, an office for health care workforce research, and simulation technology for nursing instruction.

Other –

Congressman James E. Clyburn, South Carolina's Sixth Congressional District and recently elected Majority Whip of the United States House of Representatives, addressed a joint assembly of the South Carolina General Assembly on April 10, 2007. Copies of his remarks are available in the House Journal for that day which is available at http://www.scstatehouse.net/sess117_2007-2008/hj07/20070410.htm.

Reminder: Additional information on legislation referenced above and other legislation relating to higher education is available on CHE's website at http://www.che.sc.gov/InfoCntr/Legisl/HigherEd_Legis_List.xls Links to SC's Legislative Website and other relevant information is also available on CHE's website at <http://www.che.sc.gov/InfoCntr/LegislativeSession07.htm>